

## Community TAG meeting Devil's Swamp Lake

June 25, 2012

Attendees: EPA Bart Canellas, Bill Little, DHH Dr. Ratard, USACE Bobby Dupantier, TAG Rosemary Jones, and Rev. Claiborne, Daniel Shular TA, LEJCOC Albertha Hastings, Louisiana Bucket Brigade, and 17 community members.

The next meeting was scheduled for JULY 23, 2012. This meeting has been postponed and the new date will be forthcoming.

### Questions:

1. Why did the article in the newspaper state that according to the EPA fact sheet 1500 people live in the 2 mile radius of the site? Where does this radius start and end? Is this the extent (distance) of the contamination? When can you do an examination beyond the 2 miles?  
A. We aren't familiar with the document they are using for this number. There are a lot of numbers on the internet concerning demographics. Most are based on census information. Populations are used in the Superfund ranking process and part of the Hazardous Ranking System (HRS). The HRS package was completed and the Site was proposed to the NPL. The decision was made to move forward with the investigation and changing the population number would have no effect on this decision.
2. PCB's are the focus of this study but there are lots of other chemicals, worst then PCB's, that we are exposed too.  
A. The TA explained that we are testing for other chemical along with the PCB's
3. Does this investigation include the Town of Alsen?  
A. No. The investigation focuses in the area of a release of contaminants. This is the Devil's Swamp Lake and areas of Devil's Swamp next to the lake. As the extent of contamination is investigated, this area will be expanded if needed. At this time there is no information to suggest contaminants have moved up-gradient to the Town of Alsen.
4. What about the people? You just keep testing the fish; you need to test the people.  
A. We test the fish because these contaminant bioaccumulate. This means they build up or concentrate within the tissues of organisms such as fish. The major pathway for people to be exposed to these contaminants is through the ingestion of fish and crawfish. By testing the fish, we would know if there are any unacceptable risks to the people or the environment.  
B. Testing the people is not helpful. There are no levels of chemicals that are considered safe. For example PCBs are found in almost all humans and animals. Even polar bears have PCBs in the fatty tissue. Food and dairy products are the main source of exposure to PCBs. There are many types of PCBs, PCB results in humans are listed from page 322 to 373 in the CDC 2009 4th Report

on Human Exposure to Environmental Chemicals. There are many questions and no answers: Which type of PCBs to test for? How much of the PCB comes from food and how much from fish and how much in any from soil? How fast is your body going to store the PCB and how fast can it get rid of PCBs?

If testing the people is not useful, what is useful? Look at the ATSDR leaflet on EXPOSURE. That is where you find the answer: If you are exposed to a chemical will you get sick. It depends on the kind of chemical, how much, how often and how long. This is the kind of question for which the science of toxicology can provide some answers. So to find out if you are at risk of a sickness due to a chemical we need to find out how much of the chemical there was in the air you breathe, the water you drink, the dust you inhale, the food you consume and the amount of dust on your skin. Knowing this kind of information, then it is possible to help the people. The best example is the fish advisories. Explain the process.

5. What is so difficult about finding out what the people in this Community are dying from? If the fish are contaminated, the people got sick from the fish that only make sense! You need to study the Community!
  - A. Community studies do not help. Community studies show that people all have health problems, some people more than others. There are many reasons why the information collected during a community study are completely useless. One person is going to report every single sore throat, tooth ache, stomach cramp they had, the next door neighbor may not pay that much attention to his aches and pain and report almost nothing, someone may have diabetes and report more health problems than the neighbor who is not diabetic and so on. At the end the study include a lot of information but it makes no sense in relation to the pollution.
6. DHH needs to do a study on the Community.
  - A. A study of the community is a waste of time and money because it will not provide any useful answers. Studying the environment around you is the answer. It provides the amount of chemical to which you are exposed and the science of toxicology will provide answers to how much you would expect to affect your health. THIS THE ONLY WAY TO PROVIDE YOU WITH USEFUL ANSWERS. Community studies always give false hope. When the study is completed and people find out that they have learned nothing useful they get extremely upset. Hundreds of community studies have been done and have not been useful. Hundreds of fish tissue studies have been done and they all have been useful in giving you advice on how is relatively safe to eat.
7. Why don't they test Humans?
  - A. In reference to the 5 questions above: Bart explained there are three parts to the Health question in terms of risk:

EPA will complete a Human Health Risk Assessment (HHRA) and a baseline Ecological Risk Assessment (BERA). This will generate a risk number to help EPA determine if remedial action is needed at the site.

The data collected from the fish and crawfish samples, will be used by LDEQ, LDHH and other State Agencies to do a reassessment of the current fish consumption advisory.

LDHH will also do a Health Assessment.

We want to help you and not do things that are useless and misleading. We want to spend time and money in the most useful way.

8. We feel we are totally disconnected from the people doing the investigation. How do we get to the table with you?
  - A. The EPA provides information through the "Superfund Site Summaries" posted in the Internet in the EPA website. The EPA also maintains a site mailing list where interested citizens may register their names and addresses to receive by mail periodic fact sheets issued by the Agency. Finally, EPA provided a Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) to the community, represented by the Alsen/St.Irma Lee Community Enterprise, Inc. The EPA and our partner agency, the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, have attended several meetings where we have been invited to attend and listen to the concerns of the people. Furthermore, this TAG provides funds for the group to hire a technical advisor to explain the technical documents that have been generated during this investigation.
9. A lady in the Community stated she is dying of cancer and Devil's Swamp is mentioned in a book she is reading, about people dying from industrial contamination. "LAYING WASTE" by Michael H. Brown. (The book is about the Love Canal and exposes other chemical waste dumps across the United States.)
  - A. Dr Ratard (LDHH) explained that health effect studies were difficult to pin point a specific cause, effect to a particular individual, who is going to be sick or not. Epidemiology studies and health surveys may require a large population analysis to define a trend, not based on a single individual.
10. What is the connection between the formula for an NPL Site and the Community? Was anyone in the Community involved? What questions were asked of the Community? When does the magic # come?
  - A. There is no magic number. There is a formula used to identify sites to be placed in the National Priorities List (NPL). This formula is part of the law and is known as the "Hazard Ranking System". The formula generates a score and is used by the EPA to identify those sites to propose and add to the NPL. The Devil's Swamp Lake was proposed the NPL on March 8, 2004. This announcement was made public and at that time. A public comment period was established where the community had an opportunity to present any questions or concerns.

11. When will the Community know the results? We need a timetable of what's going on and need to be kept up-to-date.

A. Bart explained this is a multi-step process. First we need to do the sampling. Then samples go to the Lab to be analyzed. The results are sent back to the investigators, this data needs to be evaluated, validated and compiled into a report. This report is then reviewed by Federal and State agencies. The results are sent to the TAG for their review and comments. After that we proceed with the HHRA, The BERA, A Feasibility Study, Alternatives, Proposed Plan, Public Meeting, Comment Period, etc. The Tier II draft report will be available by December 31.

12. The water in Alsen is no good. We can't eat the vegetables out of our gardens.

A. In November 2009, LDHH completed a Health Consultation on the Alsen Community Water Supply. The Alsen water comes from the 2 principal wells in the area and 1 back-up source. Contamination concentrations detected in the three wells were below comparison values and it was determined the water posed no concerns for peoples' health and no public health actions are needed at this time.

In May 2010, representatives of the EPA and their contractor collected tap water samples in the community, to further evaluate citizens concerns, related to the drinking water supply. The results confirmed that the water posed no concern for peoples' health.

Alsen is part of the Baton Rouge water system and is required by law, to test and monitor the water supplied to the community. You can request a copy of the results from the Baton Rouge Water Department. The number should appear on your billing statement.

13. The Companies dumped chemicals into the swamp before the lake was built. They used that contaminated dirt to build the levee. Now the levee is breached and that contaminate is spreading into the harbor and into the community when it floods. You need to test the levee; you need 10 foot core samples!!!

A. The representative of the Corp of Engineers stated that he would look into the construction of the levee and who is in charge of the maintenance of the levee. He will report back to the community at the next scheduled meeting. The property owner also claimed Rollins had been dumping into the swamp prior to the building the levee and that contaminated soil were used in the building of the levee. He wants EPA to do a core sample of the levee to look for contamination. Bart explained that there is no information in the site files to indicate any contamination in the levee soil that would present an unacceptable risk requiring remediation. In an effort to further address this community concern, surface soil samples on the levee will be collected to verify if there are PCBs present at an unacceptable concentration.

14. Clean Harbors has been hauling stuff out of the facility for 18 months and taking it to Alabama. They are trying to get rid of stuff.

A. Clean Harbors is a permitted regulated facility by the State and we are here to discuss Devil's Swamp Lake. They would have the necessary paperwork to haul thing to different facilities, and this information would appear on the manifests. The Technical Advisor (TA) volunteered to

look into this and Bart reminded them that the TA's effort need to be devoted to Devil's Swamp Lake only, and they acknowledged this.

15. There is stuff buried over there, there are tank cars buried and all kinds of chemicals they dumped in the swamp. We have people that live in the Community that worked there, and know where these things were dumped and buried.
16. Is there a current permit to discharge into the Lake?
  - A. Clean Harbors currently has a LDEQ permit to discharge storm-water runoff into Devil's Swamp Lake. This is composed only of storm water that falls on the facility and is tested in accordance with the current discharge permit. This does not include process water, which is now discharged to the Mississippi river via a pipeline, and is tested and discharged under a current LDEQ discharge permit. Historically, process water was discharged to Devil's Swamp Lake under permit, but this is no longer the case.
17. Is the Health Risk just based on the fish? The soil is where contaminates are, and they are in the soil in Alsen.
  - A. Human Health Risk comes from exposure to different media such as air, water, soils and different pathways, such as inhalation, ingestion, dermal contact, etc. The conceptual site model identified fish consumption to be the pathway of concern that could affect health risk.
18. Love Canal is just like Devil's Swamp, the same contaminates, and those people where moved. We need to be moved too! You need to buy us out!
  - A. If unacceptable risks are identified, an appropriate remedial option will be presented to the community. At that time there will be a public comment period and the EPA will consider all community concerns before making a final decision.
19. It has been known for ten years that the contaminants have migrated into the Alsen Community. You haven't done anything in Alsen.
  - A. EPA is responding by investigating a release or potential release of contaminants at the Devil's Swamp Lake. If the investigation reveals a need to extend the extent of contamination up to the Alsen Community, it would be extended. However, there is no indication of such a need at this time. No data has been identified so far to confirm a current release or potential release of contaminants in the Community.
20. There were some questions about who is doing the investigation and why we trust them if they could be a responsible party for the problem. Who is conducting the investigation?

- A. The investigation is being conducted by Conestoga-Rovers & Associates (CRA); an environmental consultant hired by Clean Harbors, Inc., on behalf of Baton Rouge Disposal, LLC. They are known as the Potentially Responsible Party (PRP).

21. Why Clean Harbors we don't trust them.

- A. They are doing this work under an order (Unilateral Administrative Order for Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study) issued by the EPA under the authority of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, as amended, (CERCLA), also known as Superfund.

The work needs to be performed according to the requirements presented in the order.

The EPA and LDEQ, in coordination with other federal and state agencies, review and approve every work plan and report produced. This is to ensure its compliance with the order and all the applicable federal and state regulations.

In addition, we share this information with the community through the TAG recipient.

The TAG group has hired a technical advisor to help the community interpret and understand these technical reports.

The EPA/LDEQ/LDHH have issued frequent fact sheets and attended several meetings in the community to further explain the findings of the investigation and answer the community concerns.

22. How can you check what they are doing?

- A. Staff of EPA, LDEQ and other federal and state agencies provide oversight to all field activities conducted.

In addition, EPA provides the services of an independent oversight contractor to supervise that field activities are conducted as per approved plans.

During these activities environmental samples are collected and EPA analyzes some of those samples independently to verify results are consistent with the results of laboratories contracted and used by the PRP.

These were the answers at the meeting to the best of our memory. It is a summarization, since we were there for 2 ½ hours, a lot more was said, but these were the major points.

**The major concerns:**

Community Health Study

Date for Risk Study

Levee Ownership /Responsibility

Levee Soil Contamination Buried

Levee Breaches Responsibility

Community Water Supply

18 Month Transporting Waste Out  
51 Years Nothing Done